HIGHLIFE WORLD MUSIC

BEST OF 2012 – OUR FAVOURITE ALBUMS OF THE YEAR

1317 Commercial Drive Vancouver, BC **tel:** 604-251-6964
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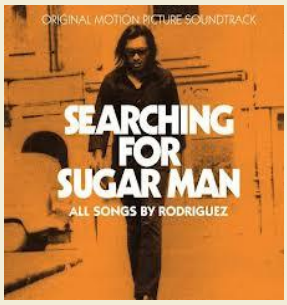
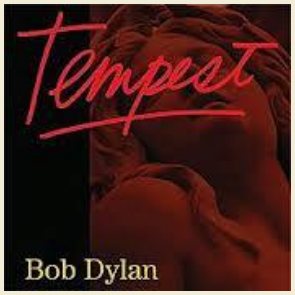
BEST OF 2012



SEARCHING FOR SUGAR MAN USA
The release of the extraordinary 'Searching For Sugar Man' movie has brought the 'lost, enigmatic' musician Rodriguez into the spotlight at long last. This soundtrack compiles his best songs from circa 1970, giving testament to the lyrical and musical talents of a man for so long overlooked in his native land. This year's most compelling musical story.

THE TOURE-RAICHEL COLLECTIVE
The Tel Aviv Session Mali/Israel
Recalling the magical cross-cultural meeting of Ry Cooder and Ali Farka Toure's 'Talking Timbuktu', Ali's son Vieux Farka Toure hooks up with Israel's Idan Raichel on this mesmerizing album. Toure's acoustic guitar plays off Raichel's piano melodies on this playful, improvisational set of mostly instrumental pieces, accompanied by calabash percussion and bass. A shimmering triumph!

PATRICK WATSON Canada
Adventures In Your Own Backyard
Recorded in Watson's Montreal apartment, these 'stories in people's backyards', delivered in his stunning falsetto, live up to their promise to make music 'people would want to listen to at home'. Intimate, elegant and achingly beautiful, these songs add up to one of this year's great albums.



BOB DYLAN *Tempest* USA
The return of the grizzled bobcat, once thought to be an endangered species, is cause for celebration. Backed by his crack touring band on this sprightly collection of blues, rockabilly and various retro sounds, Dylan entertains with his alternately humorous and poignant tales, ending with a touching tribute to John Lennon.

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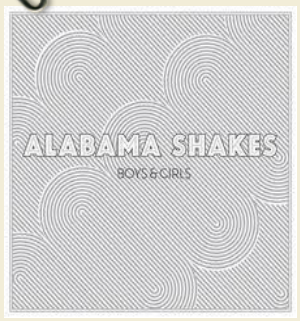
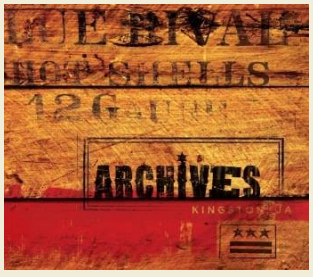


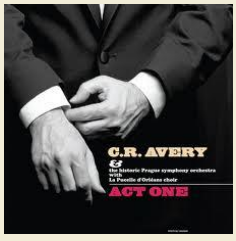
ALABAMA SHAKES *Boys & Girls* USA
Classic rock meets swamp soul on the Alabama band's explosive debut. Fronted by Brittany Howard's powerful Joplin-esque vocals, her band whips up a righteous frenzy of guitars and drumbeats to back up the lyrical passion. All in all, a stunning debut.

AMADOU & MARIAM *Folila* Mali
Moving from strength to strength, the Malian musical powerhouse returns with a rollicking album of West African blues. This time around they bring aboard an impressive line-up of guests, while keeping their guitar powered music firmly planted in African soil.

ANTIBALAS USA
Once again working with Daptone/Dap Kings main man/producer Gabriel Roth, Antibalas' 5th album is a return of sorts to their Afrobeat roots. Instrumental interplay is at the forefront, as keyboards, horns and guitars ride over the rhythm section's deep grooves, while lead vocalist Duke Amayo aims some pointed barbs at a few dubious and corrupt authorities. A strong set from the Booklyn posse.



ARCHIVES USA
Brought together by Thievery Corporation co-founder Eric Hilton (who has scoured Highlife's reggae selection a few times), Archives offer this sublime album of roots reggae. Hilton's deft production recalls the glory days of Studio One, while the band, incorporating touches of flute, melodica and fluegelhorn ensure this is much more than an exercise in retro nostalgia.



C.R. AVERY *Act One* East Van
20:16 of beat/noir poetics, orchestral musings and gospel refrains. East Van's own C.R. Avery continues to surprise, presenting his visions with the wayward danger of a cracklin' live wire.

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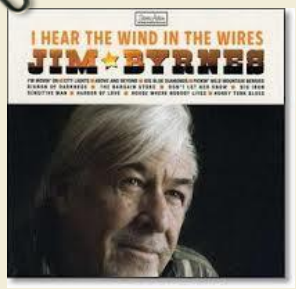

JIM BYRNES Canada

I Hear The Wind In The Wires

Long-time Vancouver bluesman Jim Byrnes turns his attention to the country music songbook this time around. With a crack band fronted by multi-instrumentalist/producer Steve Dawson, Byrnes brings new life to these great songs by the likes of Marty Robbins, Buck Owens, Hank Williams and that old country crooner Tom Waits.

CALEXICO *Algiers* USA

Recorded in New Orleans (and named for a neighbourhood on the Mississippi), the latest album by Tuscon's indie rock stalwarts remains rooted in the southwest landscapes and borderland sounds that are their trademark. Atmospheric guitars bounce off south of the border trumpets and violins, while Joey Burns delivers his enigmatic tales.

CHIMES OF FREEDOM Various Artists

This Dylan tribute, comprising 72 songs on 4 CDs, rounds up an impressive collection of current and vintage talent to offer their unique interpretations of the master songwriter's work. Adele, Johnny Cash, K'naan, Steve Earle and a bucketful of impressive voices deliver some surprising re-imaginings alongside more faithful renderings of the incredible songbook. An Amnesty International fundraiser.

JIMMY CLIFF *Rebirth* Jamaica

Who could have guessed that a punk rock group (Rancid) backing up reggae pioneer Jimmy Cliff, with it's frontman Tim Armstrong producing, could come up with one of the best reggae albums in years. A strong set of topical material finds Cliff in top form as he rides atop the ska, rock-steady and reggae rhythms on this essential album.

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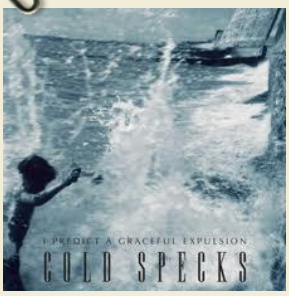
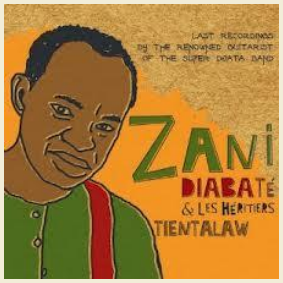


COLD SPECKS Canada

I Predict A Graceful Expulsion

Using slow-burn melodies to showcase her powerful vocals, the Etobicoke singer delivers a stunning debut of understated soul. The striking arrangements, courtesy of PJ Harvey collaborator Bob Ellis, build on a bed of acoustic guitar and piano, with splashes of gospel choruses, horns and strings to create a haunting musical landscape.



ZANI DIABATE *Tientalaw* Mali

Malian guitar legend Zani Diabate has left us one last remarkable recording. Truly a passing of the torch to his own son and his friends' sons, who form the band that accompanies him, Zani passed away suddenly during the recording session. This terrific album stands as a testament to his vitality, creativity and talents as a bandleader.

FATOUMATA DIAWARA Mali

Fatou

This beautiful debut by the young Malian artist reflects the music of her Wassoulou traditions with its circular guitar and n'goni patterns. Anchored by her acoustic guitar and gentle vocals, this is an album of understated, subtle charms.

DR. JOHN *Locked Down* USA

After last year's Bonnaroo Festival, Dr. John and Black Keys guitarist Dan Auerbach decided to record an album. The result is Dr. John's strongest recording in ages, with Auerbach in the producer's chair and adding some blistering guitar riffs. This N'awlins musical gumbo is one tasty stew!

LEE FIELDS *Faithful Man* USA

Lee Fields, who has been swimming in the classic soul stream since the 60's, finds higher ground on his latest album. Backed by the Truth & Soul house band The Expressions, he offers songs of lost love and yearning on this triumphant recording. Check his great version of the Stones 'Moonlight Mile'.

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HARAM *Her Eyes Illuminate* Canada

Ten piece Vancouver Middle Eastern jazz outfit Haram, led by guitar supremo Gord Grdina, have created a wonderfully varied and adventurous recording. Grdina trades in his guitar for an oud as the band explores nuances and improvisations on some Egyptian and Iraqi pieces.

ONDATROPICA Colombia

The latest project of music maestro Will 'Quantic' Holland brings together Colombian legends Fruko, Anibal Velasquez and Michi Sarmiento on this tropical dance floor delight. This outward looking album marries Colombian rhythms like cumbia and champeta to international sounds such as salsa, dub, ska and hip-hop on this hip-shaking joyride. Oye!

ORKESTAR SLIVOVICA *Živeli!* Canada

It's amazing what music you can find in your own backyard. East Vancouver, our backyard, is particularly fertile ground for all manner of great music. Case in point is Orkestar Slivovica, East Van's 13 piece Balkan brass band. Anyone who might think that something that exists so far from the music's source must be second rate need only hear this remarkable album to have that notion dispelled. Taking their inspiration from Serbian and Macedonian Trubaci music, this classic brass band satisfies like a glass of, what else, slivovica.

STAFF BENDA BILILI Congo

Bouger Le Monde!

From living on the streets of Kinshasa in their improvised motorized wheelchairs, this band of Congolese paraplegic musicians have come a long way, touring the world (including a recent stop in Vancouver). On their second album they crank up the intensity a few notches, adding some high-octane soukous guitars to their rootsy rumba sound. Add Roger Landu's amplified one-string fiddle to the mix, and the music takes on some strangely beautiful dimensions. The ultimate 'Congotronics' album.

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HIGHLIFERS TOP PICKS

DENNIS NELLA

1. **Patrick Watson** *Adventures…*
2. **Toure-Raichel Collective** *Tel Aviv*
3. **Searching For Sugar Man**
4. **Lee Fields** *Faithful Man*
5. **Amadou & Mariam** *Folila*
6. **Bob Dylan** *Tempest*
7. **Calexico** *Algiers*
8. **Cold Specks** *I Predict…*
9. **Paolo Fresu** *Alma*
10. **Chimes Of Freedom**

KEVIN FINSETH

1. **Patrick Watson** *Adventures…*
2. **Toure-Raichel Collective** *Tel Aviv*
3. **Bob Dylan** *Tempest*
4. **Zani Diabate** *Tientalaw*
5. **Dr. John** *Locked Down*
6. **Haram** *Her Eyes Illuminate*
7. **Staff Benda Bilili** *Bouger…*
8. **C.R. Avery** *Act One*
9. **Alabama Shakes** *Boys & Girls*
10. **Sonia Finseth** *To Build A Home*

NILS VON HAHN

1. **Antibalas** *Antibalas*
2. **Lee Fields** *Faithful Man*
3. **Hibernation** *Second Nature*
4. **Ondatropica**
5. **Zani Diabate** *Tientalaw*
6. **Dr. John** *Locked Down*
7. **Archives**
8. **Whitehorse** *The Fate Of The…*
9. **Jimmy Cliff** *Rebirth*
10. **Amadou & Mariam** *Folila*

RAUL ESPINOZA

1. **Ondatropica**
2. **Novalima** *Karimba*
3. **Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars**
4. **Wrongtom meets Deemus J.**
5. **Jimmy Cliff** *Rebirth*
6. **Lee Fields** *Faithful Man*
7. **Toure-Raichel Collective** *Tel Aviv*
8. **Fatoumata Diawara** *Fatou*
9. **Bassnectar** *Vava Voom*
10. **Willis Earl Beal** *Acousmatic…*